



FIRST CONNECTIONS

With Families

3 to 5
Years

Growing and Learning

Although development follows a general pattern, all children grow and develop at different rates. Some will be learning and doing things at different times than other children, even their own brothers and sisters. Some preschoolers do not develop typically or have been diagnosed with a health condition that may result in a developmental delay. If you have concerns about your child's ability to see, hear, talk, eat or play, call your local school district or 1-888-806-6287. Don't hurry your child along. She needs to practice what she has learned before moving to the next skill.



Supporting Growing and Learning

Children learn best by doing. You can help your preschooler grow and learn to her optimum potential by remembering these suggestions.

Here are some things your preschooler will typically learn to do.

3 Years

- ♥ Learn many ideas and use new words in short sentences
- ♥ Ask many questions and tell stories
- ♥ Become more coordinated for running, climbing and riding a tricycle
- ♥ Learn about gender and family differences
- ♥ Match colors and shapes
- ♥ Learn to play with other children
- ♥ Learn to solve problems

4 Years

- ♥ Use words to respond to others
- ♥ Use longer sentences in conversations
- ♥ Improve drawing, building, and cutting skills
- ♥ Discover about sizes, volumes, shapes, and colors
- ♥ Learn to count
- ♥ Participate in dramatic play
- ♥ Play cooperatively with other children
- ♥ Recognize some numbers and letters

5 years

- ♥ Run, jump, hop, skip and climb with ease
- ♥ Follow three-step directions
- ♥ Recognize her printed name
- ♥ Ask and answer who, what, when, where questions
- ♥ Enjoy games and follow simple rules
- ♥ Understand right and wrong
- ♥ Draw with details

- ♥ Provide a variety of things to play with; this can include things from around the house.
- ♥ Cut the front of a cereal box into several pieces to make a simple puzzle and help your child put it back together.
- ♥ Put a blanket over a card table. Let your child create a house inside.
- ♥ Do exercises together to music—jumping jacks, toe touches, bend from side to side.
- ♥ Plant some seeds, care for them, and watch them grow.
- ♥ Make a sandwich together. First it's a square, then cut diagonally it becomes two triangles.
- ♥ Have your child help you set the table or match socks.
- ♥ Read books together.
- ♥ Children this age love to tell stories. They have great imaginations and can be very creative. Enjoy their *tall tales*.

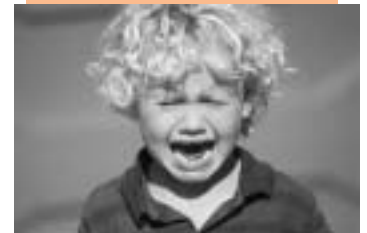
3 to 5 Years

Guiding Behavior



Your child is just starting to understand the ideas of good and bad behavior, fairness, and taking turns. He is becoming independent, but still does not always know how to control his behavior. Your child needs to learn what he can and cannot do. Here are some guidelines:

- ♥ Set a few simple rules. Your child needs limits to feel secure.
- ♥ Provide a simple explanation for each rule.
- ♥ Be positive. Say, "walk in the house" rather than, "don't run".
- ♥ Be consistent. If the rule is to walk in the house, don't play running games inside.
- ♥ Use logical or natural consequences. If he doesn't wear mittens when playing in the snow, his hands will get cold.
- ♥ Model good behavior. Your child learns from watching you.
- ♥ Allow your child to make simple choices and then honor his decision. Ask him, "Do you want peas or carrots?"
- ♥ Some children may be aggressive—they try biting, hitting, pushing, and throwing things. Try to stop a situation before it gets to this point.
- ♥ Help your child find a different activity when things aren't going well.
- ♥ Always keep safety first. Stay close to your child during a tantrum.
- ♥ Help your child think of an acceptable solution to resolve his problem or conflict.
- ♥ Help your child verbalize his feelings of anger, frustration or sadness.
- ♥ Let your child know when you like the way he is behaving.



Acknowledge the good things your child is doing.



Sharing Books With Your Preschooler

It is important to read aloud to children of all ages. Reading aloud presents books as sources of pleasant, valuable, and exciting experiences. Children who value books are motivated to read on their own. Reading aloud lets parents be role models for reading. When children see adults excited about reading, they will catch their enthusiasm. Books provide your preschooler with the quiet times she needs in her busy life.

Here are some things to keep in mind as you share books with your preschooler.

- ♥ Read stories with simple plots she can retell in her own words. Read books with rhymes, phrases, and story lines that let her participate.
- ♥ As she learns new concepts and self-help skills, read stories with characters who are having similar experiences.
- ♥ Read longer picture books, and around age five start to read chapter books that last for several sessions.
- ♥ Read books that let her use her knowledge to understand new information and ideas.
- ♥ Read poems and books with rhymes that help her learn about the sounds of letters and words.
- ♥ Visit your local library. Many libraries have a preschool story time. Check to see at what age your preschooler can get a library card.

Watching Television

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 2 hours per day of educational, non-violent quality programming. Time spent watching television takes away from important activities such as reading, playing, social development and family interaction. Your child can learn information from television that may be inappropriate or incorrect. She often can't tell the difference between the fantasy presented on TV and reality. Your child is impressionable and may assume that what she sees on television is typical, safe, and acceptable. Parents can help their child have a positive experience with TV by:

- ♥ viewing programs with her
- ♥ selecting shows appropriate for her age
- ♥ placing limits on the amount of daily & weekly viewing
- ♥ setting certain periods when the TV will be off

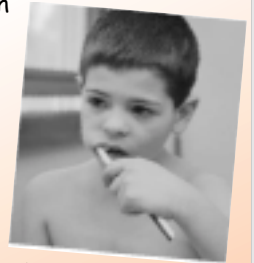
Parents need to also keep these suggestions in mind when using videos, DVDs or computer games with their child.

Keeping Your Preschooler Healthy

Parents can help their children develop many healthy practices/habits.

Here are some things you can do to make sure your child stays healthy.

- ♥ Continue to visit the dentist every 6 months or as needed by your child. Ask your dentist if there is enough fluoride in the drinking water or if you need to use toothpaste with fluoride.
- ♥ Assist your child with brushing teeth at least twice a day. Use a child-size, soft-bristle toothbrush and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste.
- ♥ Keep your home smoke-free. Secondary smoke can increase the chances of respiratory illness.
- ♥ Wash your hands and assist your child to wash his hands with soap and running water often to prevent the spread of germs. Help him learn the proper procedure for hand washing.
- ♥ Preschoolers may sleep 10 - 12 hours at night and may not need a nap.
- ♥ Serve healthy foods for meals and snacks.
- ♥ Let your child choose how much food to eat at a meal and let him stop eating when he is full.
- ♥ Your child should drink about 2 cups of milk each day. Give water to him between meals or whenever he is thirsty. You can offer him $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup 100% fruit juice per day. Drinking more than this can reduce his appetite for other healthy foods.
- ♥ Be a positive role model - practice healthy eating behaviors yourself.
- ♥ Continue with well-child visits to the doctor.
- ♥ Encourage your child to be physically active by playing tag or ball, and jumping, climbing and running.
- ♥ Active kids are healthy kids. Encourage your child to play actively for one to two hours every day.



Immunizations are important to protect your child from diseases. It is very important to keep a copy of his immunization record among your important papers. Your child will need this record throughout his life to prove he has had immunizations. If your child has missed any shots, now is the time to catch up. Every state has laws that require immunization for attending school. These are the shots your child needs before starting school in Nebraska:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ 3 DTaP (one given on or after 4th birthday) ♥ 3 Polio ♥ 2 MMR ♥ 3 Hep-B ♥ 1 Chickenpox (or documentation that child has had chickenpox) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♥ Hep-B = Hepatitis B ♥ DTaP = Diphtheria, Tetanus & Acellular Pertussis ♥ MMR = Measles, Mumps & Rubella ♥ Polio = Polio ♥ Chickenpox = Chickenpox or Varicella
<p>For information about each of these immunizations and possible reactions, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.</p>	

Keeping Your Preschooler Safe



Here are some things you can do to make sure your preschooler stays safe.

- ♥ Nebraska law requires that children up to 6 years of age be in restraints when riding in a vehicle. From age one to about age four and 20-40 pounds, your child can be in a forward-facing seat in the back seat of the car.
- ♥ Once your child is four years old and weighs 40 pounds she can move to a booster seat. All children 12 and under should ride in the back seat. Make sure you have a federally approved seat that is installed correctly. To be sure that the seat is installed correctly you can contact a Child Passenger Safety Technician. Call **1-800-745-9311** to find one in your area.
- ♥ Provide close supervision. Make sure your child rides her tricycle away from the street and always wears a helmet.
- ♥ Keep matches and lighters, medicines, and hazardous materials out of reach.
- ♥ Leave a night light on in case your child wakes in the night or has a bad dream.
- ♥ Help your child learn to cross streets and walk safely through parking lots.
- ♥ Never leave your child unsupervised around bodies of water, such as bathtubs and swimming pools. Don't rely on a life jacket to keep her safe.
- ♥ Apply generous amounts of sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 15, or higher, 15-30 minutes before going outside. Reapply sunscreen if it gets washed off due to swimming or sweating.
- ♥ Limit exposure to the sun between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.

Choosing Quality Child Care

Finding the "right place" for your child is an important decision for a family. You may choose a child care center or you might prefer a smaller family child care home. The names of licensed caregivers in your area can be obtained from the Nebraska Health and Human Services System at **1-800-600-1289**.

Here are some things to look for when selecting child care for your preschooler.

- ♥ A state child care license
- ♥ Strict health and sanitation policies
- ♥ An emergency plan, including staff trained in pediatric first aid and CPR
- ♥ A handbook or written policies for parents
- ♥ Healthy meals and snacks
- ♥ A good adult-child ratio (1 adult for every 10 children is ideal)
- ♥ A good group size (no more than 20 is ideal)
- ♥ Staff with training in early childhood education, child development, or other specialized training
- ♥ Staff who are warm, responsive, and respectful
- ♥ Staff with experience working with preschoolers
- ♥ Sounds of happy children engaged in play
- ♥ Opportunities for children to interact in small groups
- ♥ A balance of active and quiet activities
- ♥ Enough toys that are safe and age appropriate
- ♥ Positive guidance and discipline practices



Going to Kindergarten

Concerns are often expressed by parents about their child's readiness for school. Parents can help assure their child's readiness for kindergarten by making sure that their child:

- ♥ is well nourished and has his health needs met
- ♥ has plenty of opportunities to develop physically through vigorous play and use of building materials of various kinds
- ♥ has a language-rich environment through conversation and being read to on a daily basis
- ♥ has a wide variety of play-oriented experiences which add to his general knowledge about the world
- ♥ has a personal sense of well-being and confidence in his abilities
- ♥ is encouraged to be curious, creative, independent, cooperative, persistent and responsible in age-appropriate ways

When registering your child for kindergarten, you will need his official birth certificate, the results of a current physical exam, and an up-to-date record of his immunizations. Answers to some of the frequently asked questions and concerns of parents of about-to-be kindergarteners can be found in [Come As You Are: Kindergarten for Nebraska's Children](#). Copies are available from the Nebraska Department of Education.

Supporting Families

Being a parent presents many challenges and rewards. Sometimes you'll become frustrated at your child's independence or sad that your preschooler needs you less. These feelings are typical. If you're experiencing stress, see if you can leave him for a short time with your spouse or another trusted adult.

As a parent, you are likely to be a different parent with each child as you gain experience, your life changes, and you respond to the individual needs of each of your children. You may feel your relatives and friends are now more critical of your child's behavior, noise, or activity level. You, too, may wonder if you know how to make your child behave. Have confidence in the limits you set and firmly respond when tested. You should see progress over time.

Whether your child is the oldest, youngest or only child, his position in the family is a significant factor in his development. Having brothers and sisters, either older and/or younger, changes his experience in the family and the world.

Fighting is not unusual among brothers and sisters. Some fighting is inevitable. Don't expect to eliminate fights entirely—just try to keep them under control. Restate the limits you set—no hitting, no name calling. Encourage your child to put his feelings into words rather than just acting on them. Have him come up with solutions everyone can feel good about.